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Class of 1977 Five Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

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Responses from the Members of
The Class of 1977
To the Last Question on Survey Asking For
"Comments of Any Sort About Your Life
or Law School or Whatever"

Class of 1977 - Comments

I did not find law school to be either easy or enjoyable. After an extremely rewarding undergraduate experience, I found many of the classroom experiences to be intellectually dishonest. In retrospect however the analytical skills forged by Michigan's excellent faculty, sometimes against my will, are precisely the skills that have been most useful to me in practice. Keep up the good work!

I found the practice of law to be extremely dissatisfying for the following reasons:

1. Other lawyers - a very high percentage of attorneys proceed under the impression that they are "paid to lie" for their clients. The level of honesty among lawyers is depressingly low. Even the truthful ones are unnecessarily contentious.

2. The quality of the bench - The state court bench is composed of imbeciles and political hacks. With most judges, there is no purpose to preparing any kind of sophisticated legal argument, because it won't be understood. The federal bench is much better; however, the opportunity to practice there is limited by the nature of the cases seen by a sole practitioner.

3. The necessity of representing a client's interests as opposed to what I believe is right. I am not paid to be the judge, so I must zealously represent my clients within the bounds of the law. I find that such a zealous representation almost always goes beyond the limits of what I believe to be a fair result. As a result, I have re-enrolled as a full-time student in ecological science. My practice of law will be terminated as soon as three remaining cases have been wrapped up.

The intense competition (including the high quality of the competition) and the pressure to succeed made life as a law student unbearable at times. However, the legal education I received was of the highest quality; I hope the Law School maintains its high standards. Finally, the new addition to the library is quite impressive and blends in well with the rest of the Law Quadrangle.

- 1) Law school provided little or no preparation for most functions of my practice, such as: negotiation, trial practice, drafting contracts, drafting pleadings, interviewing.

- 2) My law school professors who neither practiced nor became involved in committees or other efforts to change their field of law for the better, often missed the whole meaning of relevant statutes and taught about a vacuum that doesn't exist.

When I applied to Michigan, it was because I thought it was the Michigan school I would be most comfortable at. I was not aware of or impressed with its reputation as a nationally ranked law school. I'm still not impressed. I am increasingly aware of the level of legal ideas I was exposed to--both from comparing my approaches to legal problems with other attorneys and from comparing the level of instruction apparent at the two law schools at which I have taught. For what I wanted from law school--an intellectual challenge--I apparently did go to the right school.

I admit to a prejudice because I teach legal writing, but I think Michigan should do more in teaching writing and research. I have had students return from summer clerkships with stories about the U of M clerk who didn't know how to do anything (including shepardizing & use of basic references). It's nice for my students because it helps them realize they don't have to feel inferior to a Michigan student. As an alumna I find it embarrassing.

(cont'd)

1977 Comments (2)

Clinic was the course that made law school make sense for me. I hope it is receiving continuing law school support.

I am occasionally embarrassed by the elitism of the school & some alumni. I know Michigan is very good, but that hasn't made any of us necessarily better than others.

I believe that the traditional aspects of law school teaching are the best. I strongly oppose such things as clinical courses or externships, which are largely ways to avoid taking more strenuous courses, and do not add anything to education that can't and won't be learned--the first few months of practice anyway.

My experience at U-M was a very good one. I particularly enjoyed and benefitted from experience on Law Review and interaction with other students there, and a small number of faculty members. It is my view that egalitarian pressures that make the faculty hesitant to socialize with the students they consider the most promising is a negative feature for all concerned.

My 2 biggest criticisms of U. of M. are that there is a lack of choice in courses; one either took business-oriented courses or nothing; and that most of the professors cared only about publishing & not at all about students as individuals (2 notable exceptions: Prof. Plant & Cooper). Both could change without harm to the school.

The alteration to the library is grotesque. Not only does the stairway totally disrupt the integrity of the reading room, it is absurd to put the most often used books (e.g., MCLA, F 2d) downstairs where people must walk closely past dozens of students to reach them. I'm only glad the new library was not completed by the time I left.

There is very little correlation between the two. (The questionnaire asked for comments on "your life or law school or whatever.")

I am quite pleased with my Michigan education and my life in general.

I believe the legal profession and our society benefits by having diversity in ideas, personalities, etc. It is also important that we as individuals are exposed to the various elements and attempt to understand why these things exist. I believe law school can serve a very valuable function in encouraging students to expand their awareness of not only what is going on inside the classroom but outside as well. Law is not made nor can it be practiced in a vacuum. The very purpose of law is to bring order to society and prevent anarchy. We as students, professors, and practitioners have a special responsibility to learn what people outside of law are all about if for no other reason because laws are built around people. Therefore, I encourage you, my law school, and people in the profession to be bold, curious, experiment, and seek variety in and outside the law. This will strengthen our legal profession and our society.

...I remained on active duty in US Coast Guard stationed at UM as student, hence I was a full time employee but did not put in hours at any task except law school.

I have worked for the Coast Guard as a lawyer since graduation. I have been stationed in two completely separate Legal Offices, New York and Hawaii.

My law school experience was just about the best intellectual/social experience I have ever had!

1) Although I approve of use of the case method and oppose "spoon feeding" of the law, I strongly favor introduction of an orientation course in the first year so that students will have some inkling before the end of the first term of what law school is about.

2) I count myself very fortunate to have lived for three years while at Michigan with non-law students, who helped me keep law school in perspective and broadened my vision. Efforts should be made to integrate the law school into the Michigan community (by, for example, sprinkling a few Ph.D. candidates around the Law Quad) so that law students need not eat, drink and sleep law 24 hours a day.

3) Having had the opportunity to compare notes with graduates of other law schools, I remain convinced that the general calibre of education at Michigan and the quality of the Michigan faculty in particular are superb.

The one great failing of my law school experience was that it did not stress (at all) that the ability of a lawyer in the eyes of others is measured largely by his/her ability to service the client--i.e., enable the client to accomplish its legitimate business goals without violating the law, without undue delay, and with confidence and security. Instead, law school left me with the impression that a good lawyer is one who researches every last point and provides law-review-quality work every time. In sum, law school should teach future lawyers the meaning of "SOUND PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT."

I have had a fairly low-key job in a bank trust dept.--low-key intellectually, but high-pressure due to bank inhouse politics. I won't go back after my maternity leave. I'm redirecting my legal career to encompass my true interest: women and the law. I'm going back this fall to get a master's degree, relating our culture to our laws regarding women, and I intend to teach a course on the above to college undergraduates. When my children are in school, I will return to the practice of law as a family law lawyer. Until then, I volunteer free legal advice at night in a local women's center and I may practice part-time as I teach. But law firms tend to view a person who desires part-time work as not fully committed to "the firm," and therefore not as desirable as those who can work full-time.

Why not direct some questions to your grads who are taking time off from career pursuits to raise families? There are so many different ways to do this--it would be interesting to know how my classmates are handling it.

I look forward to sending my son to the U of M.

Unfortunately some of my answers may lack real validity. I just left a 55+ law firm that offered to make me a partner (shock & disbelief!) to join a 10-12 attorney corporate legal staff. The change was primarily motivated by my desire to have more time for my husband and 2 young children (ages 7 & 3). My income temporarily is the same and the nature of my work will still be challenging but I feel I have lost prestige in the local bar which I had attained and was significant (maybe not true in fact, but it's my perception). My job change was secondarily motivated by a combination of burnout and sexual harassment by a partner which I felt I could not report.

(cont'd)

Law school did not train me to deal with clients who didn't appreciate good results, lawyers who lie, or stupid, lazy judges. Some practical advice along the way--best in the 3d year--as to how to deal with the frustrations caused by these factors would be extremely beneficial.

Basically, I'm proud to be a U-M law school grad.

I was fundamentally opposed to mandatory student activity fee which paid for activities of political organizations that I did not agree with. There is no justification for forcing law students--who have very little money anyway--to in effect pool their money to be used by a majority vote. The political activities in question bore no particular relationship to law school education, even if viewed in a reasonably broad sense. To this day I remain quite bitter about it.

1) Fundamental subjects are very important!

2) There is a need for more problem-solving seminar type courses--business planning & estate planning. The offerings given were too academic in style & orientation always delving into complex, insignificant minutia of interest only in a single case in some obscure high federal level court or to a law professor who could never generate any enthusiasm of his own for practical, real world questions.

3) The memorable & valuable academic experiences for me were provided by outstanding teachers or great intellects & by the opportunity to interact with them: F. Allen; A. Smith; J. Sax; Wright; J. J. White--irrespective of substantive area--thus, the importance of faculty can not be overstated.

4) More emphasis, training, and short assignments in the legal writing area would be beneficial; I don't believe the use of 2nd & 3rd year students is the way to do it. The Case Club approach does not teach skills, the students teach themselves inspite of the Case Clubs.

5) I never took "Lawyers & Clients," but I think greater emphasis on conflicts and professional responsibility-ethics is good.

6) Surprisingly, I found law school to be a good overall intellectual framework with which to approach law practice.

The practice of law has not been nearly as satisfying as I had anticipated. The attitude of the general public is that lawyers are all rich shysters. I am neither rich, although I wouldn't object, nor a shyster. I would rather change professions than become a shyster.

Additionally, perhaps because of my own perception of our litigious society, too much time seems to be spent avoiding malpractice rather than servicing clients, especially in litigation. I get tired of worrying about other people's problems.

Finally, most people don't seem to understand that very little law is black and white, and that proper representation involves time and expense. Everyone expects doctors to be rich, but can't understand why their lawyers charge as much as they do. It does appear, however, that an awful lot of lawyers' time is spent resolving problems created by other lawyers.

I take solace, however, in the fact that my high school classmate, who is now a dentist, is not satisfied with his career, and hopes to retire early to a leisurely life of investment administration (his own). Perhaps we are a nation of malcontents.

(cont'd)

On the positive side, I find most of the matters I work on to be interesting, and not unduly repetitious, and most of the people I come in contact with genuinely likeable. The practice of law also affords a great deal of personal freedom, even in the large firm setting, since we basically are free to establish our own work schedule, subject only to the firm's expectation concerning annual billable hours.

Practice is not as intellectually stimulating as school.

In filling out this questionnaire, I noticed that you did not ask what sorts of previous legal positions we had held. I don't know whether this was an oversight or not. In any event, when I went to law school, I did so with the expectation that I would work in public interest law, presumably juvenile law, upon my graduation. Following graduation, I worked for the federal government in two capacities--for one year as a member of the general counsel's office of the Social Security Administration, and for three years as a trial attorney with the antitrust division of the Justice Department. I was quite disillusioned by my government experience. In particular, I was disillusioned by the lack of expertise, politics & bureaucratic waste that plagued the agencies I worked for.

This past year, I took a substantial pay cut to move to a small city in Colorado. Ironically, I am now doing what I never thought I'd do--practicing general practice law. More incredibly, I am enjoying it tremendously, as I'm doing what I always wanted to do--simply helping people out.

I am still frustrated by two aspects of the profession in particular. The first is the fees lawyers charge, which I still feel to be unreasonably high. The second is that the legal profession is no panacea; rather, it is merely one element of a society that in many respects has gone awry.

Because of the highly specialized nature of my practice, little of my law school class work is relevant to the substantive area of my practice. However, the methods of analysis and legal writing taught at Michigan have proved invaluable.

Would urge that you maintain broad based class offerings with few required courses in order that a student may structure his or her law school experience to fit his or her particular needs.

My one serious criticism of my law school experience relates to the high pressure and overly competitive atmosphere for grades--a ridiculous situation among students of the high quality at Michigan. Frequently the class curves for grades were so high that distinctions were totally artificial. Some method to alleviate this "pressure cooker" atmosphere would be conducive to a better learning experience.

1) I now find general agreement with what I thought was an individual appraisal: law school is an oppressive experience. (I contrast this with my graduate school program, also at U of M, which was a stimulating experience. Obviously, this feeling, expressed by many lawyers, reflects on law school education generally.

2) All of the U of M staff, and many of the U of M faculty, were unfailingly helpful to me.

3) I enjoy practicing corporate law: it offers diversity & responsibility--and support.

The great defect of UM Law School--at least when I was there--was the ghastly quality of classroom performance by much of the faculty. It certainly appeared to me that the school had little interest in ensuring even minimal teaching effectiveness. This helped to feed an extraordinary degree of bitterness and alienation even among the most capable and successful students (in which group I include myself). The prestige of the school has of course been very valuable to me; I am not able to say the same about the education I received there. A few classes were brilliant; most were a waste of time.

Law students need an opportunity to confront questions about the use of lawyers in dispute resolution and the disadvantages of resolving personal disputes in the courts. Many attorneys do not understand why their clients remain unhappy or uncooperative because the lawyers fail to appreciate that the client's perception of "being wronged" and getting a legal solution will not resolve the dispute and will leave the person poorer. This is not limited to family or individual disputes. I've seen companies fight over "principles" and neither side is satisfied, both sides are frustrated and expend a lot of money. Attorneys need the skills to sort out the motivation for the dispute and help clients understand the limits of legal solutions, and propose creative alternatives.

Although the number of attorneys has grown, and the organized bar in some states has actively supported legal services for the poor and middle class, these segments of society continue to be under-represented even though it is more likely that they will need legal advice because of the multitude of laws and regulations that touch their lives. Medicaid, Medicare, AFDC and so forth have been recognized by courts as among the most Byzantine of statutory schemes, virtually unintelligible to the uninitiated. Social workers are not prepared to understand them, and the beneficiaries are helpless. It's absurd that specialized legal training is necessary to insure that one receives the benefits of these programs. Yet, lawyers are uninformed of such legal labyrinths.

The things I remember most clearly are the times spent talking and socializing with my friends. Conversations about issues which surfaced in the classroom often brought understanding and perspective.

I miss law school--the experience itself--but feel that only a small percentage of the material presented prepared me in any way for courtroom practice.

The University of Michigan Law School should strive to meet its' responsibility to training lawyers in their legal skills and in their social responsibilities (i.e., to the disadvantaged--minorities, poor & women).

Your questionnaire is a pain, but I've answered some of the questions. The problem with the UM Law School is that you people actually consider yourselves intellectuals with an intellectual fund of knowledge to transmit. You are a trade school. No matter how you pat yourselves on the back and chatter at cocktail parties, your status as trade school teachers changes not a whit. Hence, you become pompous fools. As the quality of student increased throughout the 70's, the quality of instruction declined because the teachers were teaching people brighter than they. Professional obfuscation became a laughable bother instead of a traditional terror. Frankly speaking, viewing the faculty spectrum from fascist to faggot, I can think of but two whom I considered even the equal, intellectually, of the average student. The "teachers" had been trained & had experience in the tricks of the trade, but were oft-times lamentably stupid.

There will come a time, perhaps, when a position on a law faculty will be seen as the capstone of a distinguished legal career rather than a niche to be filled after two years of hiding in the backroom of a government agency or large firm. There is doubtless something to be said for your Ivory Tower Trade School staffed by snuffling incompetents and social cripples. I had always heard that Michigan was known for its graduates' ability in research and writing, that if one desired the answer to a question one asked a Michigan lawyer. Were I a member of the faculty, it would give me pause to think that my school's reputation is based upon the efforts of 2nd & 3rd year student teachers--students who, by definition, are not Review & seldom Coif. What does this say about the faculty?

Law school was an interesting interlude, but has very little to do with the actual practice of law.

My law school experience was extremely important to my life. I entered law school as a relatively aimless and not particularly motivated "hippie" type. Law school opened up a whole new world I had never before encountered and with which I became totally fascinated. I was the type who turned in a mediocre performance my first year and was a straight A student by my last year. I spent several years with a large N.Y. law firm and then moved to a large financial institution. I still am fascinated by the world of business and finance and love having a real impact. In law school I developed skills and confidence and discovered my own ambition. I went to law school primarily courtesy of U of Michigan grants and loans, and enthusiastically contribute to the fund. I certainly hope the law school will continue to find room to admit bright, but poor, students. I believe education must be open to all who qualify intellectually in order to preserve the egalitarian aspects of U.S. society and keep the lines of social mobility open.

The last time I participated in a law school survey, the conclusion was that people like me should never have been admitted.

- 1) 1st year of law school was the most unpleasant year of my life.
 - 2) The law school's policies, especially in terms of financial aid and admissions, favoring minorities and disfavoring non-minorities are a continuing source of resentment to me and a major reason why I do not financially support the law school more as an alumnus.
 - 3) Although I value the excellent legal education that I received at U of M Law School, I feel no sense of loyalty or continuing obligation to the Law School. I paid my tuition without any financial aid from the law school and earned my degree. I fulfilled my end of the deal and, therefore, feel no duty as an alumnus to continue to support the law school.
 - 4) I dislike intensely being solicited for law school fund contributions by alumni who are senior partners in my firm. It is inherently coercive.
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- 1) Oh, what the hell.
 - 2) We need to certify specialties. I know for a fact I couldn't pass the bar now, because all I know is personal injury. But it's all I need to know. There should be specialized tests for people who want to limit themselves to a specialized practice. Of course, they should demand competence in that specialty, not just the ability to get by. But passage should allow them to practice in that specialty, regardless of passing a general bar exam. There should be periodic re-exams for specialists. And we should stop talking about it & start doing it, because many practitioners don't belong in the courtroom or in many other specific areas, either.
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I wanted to explain why, in question B-6, I said that although law school had been satisfactory from the point of view of intellectual experience and career training, it was unsatisfactory overall: the reason it seemed so unsatisfactory was more a personal/emotional one. The experience was one of great pressure, being swamped with seemingly irrelevant detail, isolation, unpleasant competitiveness, and confusion about goals. Part of the problem was that much of the coursework was so demanding but at the same time so remote from real life -- challenging in the sense of intellectual game-playing but in no other sense. The situation was salvageable only because of the good communication I felt from instructors such as David Chambers, J.J. White, John Reed, and Vince Blasi.

Law school was the most difficult experience of my life. I am slowly recovering.

Although I am compensated well, I think I would be happier and obtain greater satisfaction as a non-lawyer. Law practice is not all that exciting or stimulating on a day to day basis. Query whether other positions in business are any better?

Like most of my peers, I found myself feeling vaguely unhappy during my 4½ years at a major Wall St. firm. Having now joined the government as general counsel to the Nat'l Endowment for the Arts, my satisfaction level has risen dramatically.

Private practice in a large firm, like invention, is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration. Had I known the extent of the drudgery of practicing law before law school, I probably would not have attended. In retrospect, however, the decision to attend law school appears one of the best I ever made, when I consider the drudgery faced by people in other fields (some of whom get less than 1% inspiration).

When I attended Michigan undergraduate (LS&A) school, I hated it. I continued to hate it after I left for several years. I begrudgingly decided to attend Michigan Law (over UCLA) because of the in-state tuition advantage. While at Michigan Law I considered it neither wonderful nor terrible. It had some fortuitous high points (e.g., the "mix" of old and young, male and female, white and black students in my first year section was a magical "fit" with the panel of professors --Pooley, Plant, Regan, Westen, Green) but overall it was quite mediocre. In retrospect, however, it was wonderful compared to the horror stories I've heard from others. The Michigan degree also wins respect--especially when the football team wins.

Overall, it's (my life) very good!

Emphasis of law school should be more on business/commerce, less on crusading for "social justice" (which usually means taking from those who work and produce and going to those who do not).

Please continue to take all actions necessary or desirable to maintain U-M Law School as one of the finest law schools in the U.S.

1. Women are heavily and blatantly discriminated against in smaller cities, perhaps especially in the West.

(cont'd)

2. Law schools should skip soft course offerings such as discovery & trial tactics and require more hours of hard core basics. Technique is better learned in practice from lawyers who use it every day. Law firms should stop complaining about lack of practical experience and realize that all young lawyers need to apprentice. The graduates who can (1) think, (2) research, (3) organize, and (4) have a thorough working knowledge of several substantive areas make better lawyers in the long run.

3. The practice of law is destructively all-consuming. 20 to 40 hour a week jobs at fair wages are desperately needed for women so that they can work and raise families without destroying themselves and their marriages in the process.

The only real complaint is that in order to do an outstanding job, sacrifice is required--basically, loss of a family life.

Law School was generally less than a happy experience for me and most of my friends. We had all been used to intellectual pursuits and to a substantial degree of success in those endeavors. Probably due to the enormous class sizes, few of us ever felt that we had the opportunity fully to flesh out the concepts raised in class. The opportunity to ask questions & volunteer answers was grossly overborne by the risk of looking foolish, or, worse, being made to look foolish in front of a sea of faces. Class time was rarely a true dialogue situation in which all or most of the students truly followed and were stimulated by the discussion. It became an exercise in reading the cases and outguessing the prof.

I will say my education more than adequately prepared me for life as a lawyer; it could have been better and less painful.

There are too many attorneys who attempt to practice on their own, who are not competent to do so. The law schools are somewhat to blame as 1) they graduate too many; 2) they don't give or offer enough "nuts & bolts" type courses and 3) they don't "deglamorize" the profession, painting a more realistic picture.

I thought law school was unnecessarily cruel and oppressive. I like practicing law.

I enjoyed law school very much.

I enjoy being a lawyer and practicing law but dislike the time pressures that limit my ability to better represent my client and that interfere with my available non-working time and activities.

I was a summer starter. The first summer and to a lesser extent the whole first year was very exciting and enjoyable. It got progressively more routine after that.

I could support a two year law curriculum with a year's internship sandwiched between. The law school should help arrange the internships.

I was not prepared for how incompetent I would feel during the first few years of private practice. The practice of law involves many things not taught in law school, including preparing pleadings and visualizing what effect certain actions could have down the road. A full year's course taking a particular fact situation from first interview, through pleadings, discovery, motions, trial, appeal, etc. using teams in a mock situation might be helpful to some students.

Also, I think a course in Michigan civil procedure would have been helpful for those of us who stayed in Michigan. (It helps immensely to know your way around your state's court rules.)

1) UM covered race/minority issues in a number of questions--carefully skirted it in law school admissions policies. What about it?

2) UM financial aid--family economic minimums--unreasonably low

--not enough consideration to merit--i.e., too much on minority qualifications, low economic floors

--not enough "non-minority"-objective criteria weighting.

Both policies tend to reflect the current "social engineering," liberal perception of what law schools should be--not necessarily an individual's merit, value, etc.

Unlike many of my fellow students, I enjoyed my academic career, including law school. I do not feel (and did not then feel) that law school was a "de-humanizing" experience; the experience did not alter my personality in the least.

I loved my time in Ann Arbor.

A great town. I still live there.

I thought the profs & students at U of M Law School were very bright & stimulating.

I really liked seminars ... much more than large lecture courses...in law school.

I went to Law School hoping to a) gain broad perspective on life

b) sharpen my mind

I feel I accomplished both.

I practice as a business litigator. I believe that the costs of such litigation are so high--and growing--that changes will be forced by clients, such as curtailment of discovery and informal dispute resolution procedures.

I have found that a law degree from U of M does not carry as much weight within the State of Michigan as it does in other states. I have also found that the curriculum at U of M does nothing to prepare one for the actual PRACTICE of law. Not enough time or classes are scheduled for practical skills as opposed to knowledge or educational legal skills. Classes in negotiation should be mandatory, as should classes in public speaking.

In my case, success in law school proved to be a poor predictor of success and happiness in law practice. I believe this happened because I did not possess sufficient "people interaction" and negotiation skills when I entered law school, and my law school experience did not improve those skills. I am in the process of trying to improve those skills, although I have had limited success to date. It would have been helpful for me if someone, either before or shortly after entering law school, had caused me to focus on the fact that law school, with its academic surroundings and hypothetical problems, is quite different from law practice, with its real people and real problems. If I had done that focusing I might have decided not to enroll in law school or, if I had still enrolled, I might have tried to get more out of the experience than pure "book-learning."

Law School has little relevance to the actual practice of a trial lawyer. Perhaps that is just as well.

I have been with a private firm for only 9 months, but have answered the questions for my current job. Prior to that, I spent 4 years in the Justice Dept's Antitrust Division. Government practice can be very frustrating. Like every place else, one's experience there is a matter of luck, as well as ability. I found that I did not have as many opportunities as I had hoped for to learn and to practice legal skills. Bureaucratic "mickey mouse" and frustration can be enervating. The multiple levels of review can be more exasperating than law firm constraints.

One experience that is infrequently mentioned in Law school is the U.S. Attorney offices for criminal and civil work. Good experience. I did it for a summer and really enjoyed the work.

I hate surveys!

I always believed that I would be a good lawyer--a belief given credence by the high LSAT score that got me into Michigan. I think I have done well in the 5 years since law school--I am a partner in my own firm and derive tremendous intellectual and professional satisfaction from my practice.

Law school, on the other hand, almost ruined me for the law. The classes were horrendous and not improved by being conducted in a manner best suited to (a) classes under 15 or (b) third grade. Either (a) Dean Langdell (last (only?) successful practitioner of Socratic method) should be resurrected or (b) method should be abolished. Law School was an unmitigated intellectual disaster.

Clinical offerings were the exception. Real-life component meant bad instructors couldn't ruin them. They should be expanded to embrace a wider variety of skills and applications, rather than essentially just litigation.

My chief gripe about law school was environmental--2 principal changes could be made; (1) more guidance regarding what it is in terms of what is being sought by the professors (most especially in the first year)--i.e. more practice exams that do not count but with average "A" and "B" level answers distributed and (2) more conscious effort at fostering "fun" in what is an overly serious or neglecting environment.

I would contribute to a fund designed to inject a jet of random calculated unorthodox frivolousness into the occasional student day. Preferably, the decision maker as to what constituted "fun" would not be an attorney.

As far as training for the outside world, courses should be offered in how to deal with people; clients, secretaries, organizations--organizational behavioral issues. Also more learning on what to expect in practice but not necessarily clinical work--rather case evaluation of the big issues in the area.

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1. I entered private practice after graduation. When I consider how well prepared for their work are the doctors, dentists and other professionals of this time, I am extremely disappointed in the practical preparation provided by an otherwise fine law school.
 2. Continuing education is a necessity. Many excellent CLE programs exist--not of them use the Socratic method. Is this archaic practice perpetuated in law schools merely for the sake of tradition?

I found law school at U of M to be a very enjoyable experience. Among the contributing factors were the bright, sensitive, considerate, and intellectually stimulating professors (for the most part) and the bright, cooperative, friendly students (for the most part).

(cont'd)

Although I don't know that I would recommend any changes in the law school curriculum because it suited me very well, it might be worth noting that law school does not provide one with the practical skills of being able to do discovery, draft wills, mortgages, pleadings or contracts, all of which can be helpful in practicing law. Nonetheless, all of these skills are easily learned once in practice, at least on a simple level.

Overall my only general comment is THANK YOU To THE U of M Law for an enjoyable and intellectually stimulating 3 years.

By virtually any standard, I have achieved outstanding success in my legal career thusfar. I am a highly regarded corporate and securities lawyer in a large, prestigious eastern law firm and I outperform most of my peers. Although I am only five years out of Law School, I have published a major article in The Business Lawyer which has been well-received and cited repeatedly in federal district court on appellate cases, I have co-authored a book on Capital-Raising Under the Securities Laws, published other articles, served on panels with nationally known practitioners in the securities law field and participated in drafting a major ABA Comment Letter to the SEC on Regulation D. Nonetheless, I had difficulty gaining entry to law school on the basis of the selection criteria employed at the time and did poorly in law school courses. Had I not written my way onto Law Review, I probably would not have secured a satisfactory position. All this says something about the inadequacies of law school admissions criteria and measures of performance in law school. I found law school a demeaning, unpleasant and generally worthless experience. I attribute my success in practice, not to anything learned in law school, but rather to my training as a logician and analytic philosopher at Michigan's graduate school. It is not much of an exaggeration to say that I could have performed just as well as a lawyer if I skipped law school entirely.

The University of Michigan Law School remains a highly respected institution among the judges and attorneys that I have had dealings with in the five years since I graduated.

Law profs should be less authoritarian--it's adolescent behavior. They need a greater sense of humor.

Law school should have more opportunity for small group discussions.

Classes are much too large.

Should be a few social functions to get to know profs.

Having done other work before law school, I felt discriminated against on the basis of age (34 at graduation) by law firm interviewers. Corporations were not as prejudiced. Need to encourage more corps. to interview at UM Law School. Placement people need to advise older students not to waste too much time with interviewing law firms.

Marriage and profession is still very difficult for women.

I never really gained a clear concept of my role in various situations, as a lawyer--either in law school or practice.

Most of law school is too far removed from the realities of practice, more hands-on work is needed.

- 1) Law school becomes more 'ivory tower' the further I get away from it.
2) Law school professors are in large part unaware of the realities of practices in the real world, i.e., small urban areas and country circuits.
3) Some practical courses (How to) would not hurt a law school.
4) Despite the belief that there are no hard and fast rules--there are--in substantive law and in procedure.
5) Collecting fees is tough and tougher in a recession/depression.

I was recently told of the expressed perception of a U of M professor that students have become more concerned with money and income over the past five years. This concern at a time devoted to education is scary in view of the greed rampant in the profession--a greed which for many attorneys appears to override their concern for law or for ethical considerations, whether professional or general.

The local Clerk and Recorder told me today that some attorneys had stated they would file documents they knew did not comply with the law, if they could "slip them past the Clerk and Recorder." Horror tales of the use of delay tactics to thwart justice have come to the attention of virtually every attorney, whether through personal experience or through reading legal literature. Abuse of the legal process by lawyers seems endless. I sometimes wonder why lawyers as a group have as much respect as they do.

I recognize that many attorneys labor competently and unobjectionably. I hope to be one such attorney, but objectionable and illegal practices by lawyers abound to far too great a degree. Perhaps its just been a bad week, but I can't forget the typical response when I say I believe I'm an honest attorney, "Not making any money are you?" A sad commentary, even if made in jest.

New York City is a particularly tough location in which to combine a career and family life. We look forward to the months of July and August as they are the only months in which it is possible, occasionally, to arrive home before dark. Although my wife and I are both attorneys, the acquisition of that home came only after five years of modest living and consumption* and then only in an area hours away from our employment. Now that we have our home, we find it economically difficult, if not impossible, to begin a family. We went to law school expecting that challenging and financially rewarding careers would follow. It is sad to say that we have found, at best, mixed results. It is unfortunate that publications such as the American Lawyer did not exist when we went to law school because, if we had been forewarned of the drawbacks of practice in New York City, we might well have chosen somewhere else. Now, in the minds of those in other cities, we are too highly paid and specialized to make an acceptable transition. In short, we may be stuck. Our principal consolation is our comfortable life style occasionally enjoyed in our suburban home. In certain respects, it also is consoling to be married to one in the same straightjacket--perhaps misery does love company.

*Had we cohabitated instead of married, the marriage penalty tax we paid (approximately \$30,000 over that period) if instead saved would have permitted us to leave our small one-bedroom apartment much sooner.

I think more consideration should be given to the issue of women in practice. There is so much stress on women trying to have a career and raise a family that the bar ought to think about means to relieve this pressure. Not only do women generally have difficulty because they are not taken seriously in the first place, any action taken in the direction of a family life jeopardizes whatever credibility a woman lawyer has (painfully acquired).

Law school is certainly the best place to acquire knowledge of substantive areas. However based on my experience in litigation and in corporate, law school bears no resemblance whatever to practice. More emphasis should be placed on legal writing--and not just for the privileged characters on Law Review.

Michigan provides a preparation for legal practice as good as that provided by any school, I believe. (Of course, there are substantial problems at all schools). As such, a substantial majority of students and alumni would probably be happy with it, at least as compared to other schools. (Again, some or many may object to features of all law schools). However, for the minority like myself who end up in academics, Michigan did not provide much of an intellectual background. As capable as most of the faculty are in doctrinal and pedagogical matters, most are either out of touch with the variety of intellectual developments in the law, or else fail to mediate these developments to their students.

During my four years in the government and private practice I thought quite well of my legal education, believing that what it lacks was absent from all law schools. Since starting to teach last year, I have discovered a vitality in "legal thinking" I simply hadn't been taught. I have found myself at a disadvantage compared to colleagues from Harvard, Yale, and Stanford, who left law school generally familiar with these developments. Despite the fact that the Michigan faculty seems friendlier (to each other and to students) than the Harvard and Yale faculties, and despite the obvious strengths of the faculty, I am not at all sure my decision to go to Michigan was the right one.

Life--Often the resemblance to a pet gerbil's exercise wheel is much too great for comfort.

Law School--The U of M Law School is indubitably a great institution but it often is in danger of falling into the trap of arrogance which may ultimately erode the quality of learning and teaching in it. The teaching is, on the whole, not nearly so well done as most of the faculty think. Virtually all students are more than adequate as to competence and motivation, yet too much of the resource allocation for student research and teaching is narrowly distributed, by reason of tradition or misplaced elitism or both, e.g. the exclusivity of the Law Review, the narrow career focus of the Placement operation.

Whatever--Computers are the future now.

I sincerely believe that the University of Michigan Law School provides the finest legal education available in the United States.

I wish I could be more specific in making recommendations on how law school could better prepare one for the practice of law--I cannot. In fact, my opinion now is that law school can not do so. The judgment necessary to be a lawyer, which I consider the most important element of a lawyer's skills, cannot be taught--it comes with experience, logic and age! The bottom line is--U of M was OK.

This questionnaire did not give me the chance to say how much I enjoy supervising law students in a clinical setting. So, I've said it now.